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Regional cooperation

Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Cooperation with other regional bodies

Summary

The present addendum to the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields provides the Economic and Social Council with the current status of coordination and cooperation between the regional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies in their respective regions.

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Introduction

1. The regional commissions continue to strengthen their partnership with the other relevant regional organizations and integration groupings as well as the civil society institutions in their respective regions. Indeed, cooperation with those entities form a major plank of their strategic response in promoting regional cooperation for development.

I. Economic Commission for Europe

2. In the broadest sense of peace preservation, the activities of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), since its establishment, have been aimed at keeping a dialogue open among confronting parties, while trying to promote mutually beneficial economic cooperation. This approach has been based on the assumption that progressive development is in itself conducive to peace, while poverty and inequalities tend to generate frictions and conflicts.

3. Accordingly, ECE, in addition to promoting cooperation in such areas as environment, energy, transportation, trade and enterprise development, has been contributing both analytically and operationally to the efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to prevent conflict by raising the awareness and understanding of the role of economic factors in generating conflict.

4. In 2001, ECE jointly organized with OSCE, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU), a colloquium on the economic dimension of conflict and terrorism (November 2001, Villars, Switzerland), in which representatives of the private sector actively participated for the first time. As a result, a new initiative was created — a Public-Private Partnership for Peace — to mobilize private sector contributions to the developmental activities of ECE in post-conflict and conflict-prone areas of the region, in order to ensure that primary economic and environmental causes of conflict are removed or, at least, mitigated.

5. ECE has also contributed to the efforts of NATO to improve its constituency's understanding of the economic factors that could lead to a violent response. It has worked in the reconstruction of the conflict-affected subregions such as South-East Europe (Southeast European Cooperation Initiative (SECI)) and South Caucasus (South Caucasian economic cooperation initiative) and, in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), has tried to mitigate the risk of conflict caused by water shortage with the member States of Central Asia (United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA)).

6. The ECE Committee on Human Settlements has begun the follow-up to the Strategy for a Sustainable Quality of Life in Human Settlements in the Twenty-first Century approved by the Ministerial meeting in 2000, by arranging an in-depth discussion on facilitating social cohesion and security through urban development. During the discussions, it was stated that social cohesion is an essential condition for security in democratic society, and that failure to establish a stable political, economic and social environment that provides an adequate standard of living for all groups in a country would contribute significantly to political instability, ethnic conflicts and problems related to refugees and asylum-seekers.

II. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

7. ESCAP has further strengthened its close cooperation with other intergovernmental bodies in the regions.

8. The Sixth Consultative Meeting among Executive Heads of Subregional Organizations and ESCAP took place in Port Vila, Vanuatu, on 29 and 30 October 2001. The meeting agreed to cooperate in poverty assessments to monitor the gaps and accomplishments in respect of the millennium development goals, as well as exchange information on best practices in poverty alleviation. Also discussed were possible areas of cooperation in responding to the challenges of globalization, such as: human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), drug trafficking, human trafficking and asylum-seekers; trade facilitation and e-commerce; and environmental challenges and opportunities. The Secretary-General of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) visited ESCAP in February 2002, and sought the assistance of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in the preparation of a "poverty profile" of

SAARC member countries as well as a draft social charter.

9. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and ESCAP have continued to cooperate in the areas of regional economic cooperation, social development and transport. At the thirteenth meeting of the Steering Group of the Committee for Regional Economic Cooperation, organized by ESCAP in Hanoi, Viet Nam, in November 2001, the meeting was informed of the progress made under the Framework Agreement on the ASEAN Investment Area, including the two-year work plan for collective promotion of intra- and extra-ASEAN investment, and recommended that ESCAP participate in that process.

10. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and ESCAP have cooperated closely in the preparatory processes for the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the International Conference on Financing for Development. ADB was a co-sponsor of the High-level Regional Meeting for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which was organized by ESCAP in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in November 2001 (see E/CN.17/2002/PC.2/8), and ADB and ESCAP organized a Joint Workshop on Mobilizing Domestic Finance for Development: Reassessment of Bank Finance and Debt Markets in Asia and the Pacific, in Bangkok on 22 and 23 November 2001. ADB participated in the first meeting of the Advisory Panel of the Joint United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/ESCAP Poverty Centre in Bangkok and gave a presentation on investment promotion along economic corridors and cross-border zones at the ESCAP Subregional Seminar on Investment Promotion for Indo-China, held at Hanoi in March 2002. ESCAP also participated in the ADB Subregional Investment Working Group of the Greater Mekong Subregion.

11. ADB and ESCAP are members of the "Clean Air Initiative" Working Group designed to promote and demonstrate innovative ways to improve air quality in Asian cities and the two organizations co-sponsored a regional workshop on reducing vehicle emissions, held in Manila, Philippines, in February 2002. The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and ESCAP are cooperating actively under the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia in the field of transport facilitation and border-crossing movements. In the area of statistics, ADB and ESCAP, together with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), jointly organized a Workshop on Composite Leading Indicators and Business Tendency Surveys in October 2001. In collaboration with ECO, ESCAP organized the fourth subregional training workshop on environment statistics for ECO countries, in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, in August 2001.

12. Meetings have been held among ESCAP, ADB and UNDP on a possible role for ESCAP in the process of rehabilitation and recovery in Afghanistan. In the area of conflict prevention and peace-building, preliminary discussions have been held with the Department for Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat for organizing a seminar at ESCAP on issues of arms transparency falling within the framework of disarmament and development.

III. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

13. During the period under consideration, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) expanded and strengthened collaboration and coordination with regional and subregional bodies. The former group includes the Organization of American States (OAS), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA); the second group includes the Central American Integration System (SICA), the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the three subregional development banks, namely, the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the Andean Development Corporation (CAF), as well as other initiatives at the subregional level such as the Puebla-Panama Plan.

14. ECLAC continued cooperating with OAS, mainly within the framework of the Summit of the Americas, in which ECLAC is active in 18 items included in the Plan of Action. Besides the work leading to the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the two fields in which ECLAC has been more active are transportation and labour issues. ECLAC has continued to further develop the main lines of work set forth in the Plan of Action proposed by it to, and approved by, the second ministerial meeting of the Western Hemisphere Transport Initiative (WHTI)

(Punta del Este, Uruguay, March 2001). In the case of labour issues, the Plan of Action of the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour (IACML), adopted in Ottawa, Canada, in October 2001, called for an improved collaboration and coordination among all relevant actors. On the basis of the above, ECLAC established a liaison mechanism with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to guarantee that the Commission's contributions to the process adequately complemented those from other agencies involved.

15. ECLAC and IDB continued to collaborate during the period, the most noteworthy joint initiative being the ECLAC/Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE)-IDB agreement on the dissemination and use of data from the 2000 round of censuses initiated in May 2001.

16. The regional preparatory processes and follow-up to the United Nations world conferences and summits were also conducive to further collaboration between ECLAC and some regional bodies. In the case of the preparatory process of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, OECS coordinated with the ECLAC secretariat the submission at the Regional Preparatory Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean for the World Summit on Sustainable Development of an OECS report aimed at presenting the experience of the small island developing States of the OECS subregion and developing a platform outlining key policy issues, interests and priorities and follow-up action for these countries. In preparation for the International Conference on Financing for Development, ECLAC forged closer cooperation ties with IDB and the subregional development banks, namely, CABEI, CDB and CAF.

17. In the case of SICA, in addition to collaboration in traditional areas, there have been new activities within the framework of the Puebla-Panama Plan, launched in November 2000 as a Mexican proposal for a development strategy for the area between the south-east part of Mexico and Panama. Within this framework, collaboration has taken place, inter alia, between ECLAC and the SICA Secretaries for Social Integration and Tourism and its Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCED).

18. ECLAC has also maintained contacts with other intergovernmental forums, such as the Permanent Mechanism for Consultation and Concerted Political Action in Latin America (Rio Group), the Latin American Parliament and the technical secretariats of the ministries for the environment, mining, energy, transport and housing and urban development of the countries in the region.

IV. Economic Commission for Africa

19. During the period under review, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) intensified its collaboration with other regional and subregional intergovernmental bodies in Africa. The strengthening of cooperation was based on the comparative advantages and expertise of each organization. Whenever possible, joint activities were undertaken with other regional and subregional bodies to reinforce synergies and lessen duplication of efforts. In addition, ECA worked closely with other United Nations and non-United Nations intergovernmental bodies in coordinating the regional preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. A Joint Secretariat, comprising ECA, UNDP/Capacity 21, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the six subregional economic groupings — the Arab Mahgreb Union (AMU), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) — was established to coordinate this process. ECA and OAU, together with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), collaborated in the substantive servicing of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Industry in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in October 2001. OAU, AfDB and ECOWAS remained active partners in the ECA-led initiative on the development of a comprehensive peace-building programme in the Mano River Basin countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Collaboration on several issues between the subregional economic groupings and the subregional development centres (SRDCs) of ECA located in each of the subregions of the continent was also strengthened in 2001.

20. The adoption by African leaders of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as the strategic blueprint for achieving the African Union has

given new meaning and substance to the partnership approach being pursued by ECA. Working within the context of a Joint Secretariat, which comprises OAU, AfDB and ECA, the three institutions have continued to provide support to African member States in the implementation of the 1991 Abuja Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (see A/46/651, annex) towards realizing an African Union, through promoting intraregional trade, and strengthening monetary and transportation links, as well as promoting policies and programmes to accelerate growth and development for poverty reduction.

21. The Heads of State Implementation Committee (HSIC) of NEPAD, comprising 15 countries, held a meeting in the Nigerian capital of Abuja, in October 2001. Among other things, the meeting established task teams/lead agencies to identify and prepare specific projects and programmes, with major tasks assigned to the three main regional organizations, OAU, AfDB and ECA, as follows: capacity-building on peace and security (OAU); economic and corporate governance (ECA); and infrastructure (AfDB). In addition, ECA and AfDB were assigned the task of developing strategies for enhancing capital flows to Africa.

22. The third African Development Forum (ADF III), organized in Addis Ababa in March 2002 by ECA, with the support of other regional organizations, focused on how Africa can accelerate progress towards achieving regional integration. In addition to OAU and AfDB, the Steering Committee of ADF III comprised SADC, ECOWAS, the East African Community (EAC), COMESA, the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and ECCAS.

V. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

23. As part of its recent revitalization exercise, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has adopted a strategy for promoting post-conflict development of the region. In this respect, ESCWA has been providing Lebanon with policy advice and support for the rehabilitation of cities that were devastated during the Lebanese civil war. One of the objectives is to make the human settlements socially inclusive and to allow stronger participation by all members of the society.

24. In a related initiative, ESCWA is assisting communities of the post-occupied areas of south Lebanon in the identification of priority needs and integrated development for post-conflict rehabilitation in the areas of transport, water and the environment, energy, agriculture, urban development, and information and communication technologies (ICT). ESCWA is preparing project proposals based on these priorities and may enter into partnership with other organizations for implementing them. Together with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), ESCWA is promoting ICT and is providing schools in south Lebanon with computers and training. ESCWA is also carrying out a project in south Lebanon for upgrading skills and small business capacities whereby school dropouts, women and unemployed youth would receive vocational training and microcredit finance as part of the post-conflict rehabilitation process.

25. As a follow-up to Commission resolution 237 (XXI) on the rehabilitation of the economic sectors in Palestine, dated 11 May 2001, ESCWA provides policy advice and technical assistance to assist the Palestinian Authority in rehabilitating its economic sectors.

26. ESCWA has consistently maintained close partnership with the other regional organizations in the follow-up and implementation of the global conferences. During 2001, ESCWA, the League of Arab States, UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) organized the Arab Conference on Women and Poverty: A Gender Perspective. For this conference, ESCWA prepared and presented three studies on the situation of women in the region. On the five-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development,[1] a joint ESCWA/League of Arab States-organized meeting of the Population Council took place in Rabat, Morocco. Likewise, for the two major global conferences of 2002, namely, the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the regional preparations were spearheaded by ESCWA in close cooperation with the Arab Monetary Fund and the League of Arab States. Summit preparations also involved the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE).

Notes

[1] *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.